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ABSTRACT

This project was conducted in Port Townsend, Washington, to discover whether an invisible network of learning existed and to determine its characteristics. A total of 196 respondents were interviewed in the study. They included persons knowledgeable about learning in the community, providers of learning experiences, and a random sample of 75 names selected from the Port Townsend telephone directory. Data about community learning were also gathered from bulletin boards, local newspapers, and conversations. Five months of observations resulted in the discovery of an "invisible network of learning" in Port Townsend that contributed to the vitality of the city. Randomly selected respondents (50) participated in a total of 320 learning activities. The five most often used resources for these learning activities were "own selves," friends, own books and magazines, other resources, and family. Some of the learning experiences in which respondents were engaged included taking responsibility for a troubled child, designing a switch for a vacuum cleaner, lapidary work in Arizona, growth in family relationships, raised bed gardening, foster care for the elderly, computer classes, and sailing lessons. Learning providers included businesses, artisans, physicians, churches, government agencies, and individuals. Their motives for providing the experiences included the need to be involved, the need to deal with life crises, the need to preserve dying arts, and the need to earn an income. The researcher came to the conclusion that living is learning and learning is often supported by an invisible community network of a wide range of resources. (KC)

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THE INVISIBLE NETWORK OF LEARNING IN A SMALL COMMUNITY

(AND BRIEF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO ADULT LEARNING STUDIES)

by

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THE INVISIBLE NETWORK OF LEARNING IN A SMALL COMMUNITY

Community education is the structured or unstructured process that formal and informal community systems use to transmit knowledge and skills within communities. During a recent five month period (February-July, 1984) of job searching, the author conducted a self-designed and self-supported field research project on learning in Port Townsend, Washington. The purpose of the study was to discover if an invisible network of learning existed in Port Townsend, and if so, its characteristics. A total of 196 respondents were personally interviewed in the study. The following is a description of the methodology used in the study and research results.

METHODOLOGY

In developing the Port Townsend study the researcher had a hunch that an 'invisible network of learning' existed in Port Townsend. Building on this hunch, a proposal was developed outlining a methodology for data collecting (see appendix A). First was unobtrusive data gathering about community learning listed on and in community bulletin boards (including store windows, cafes, washaterias, bookstores, community centers, food co-ops, and other locations), and local newspapers as well as listening to any local conversations that might include references to personal or group learning opportunities. The second included snowball sampling, i.e., questioning key informants about local learning opportunities, contacting individuals responsible for those opportunities, and, questioning them about other opportunities for learning with which they were familiar. Finally, an attempt was made to conduct semi-structured interviews from a random sample of 75 names generated from the Port Townsend telephone directory.

Random sampling was the most difficult research phase, a not uncommon occurrance among field researchers who reported the need to discipline themselves to allow the research process to 'unfold' rather than limiting it to previously set hypotheses.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Five months of observations resulted in the discovery of an 'invisible network of learning' in Port Townsend; extensive, it contributed to the vitality of the city. Formal and informal, group, person to person, cultural, domestic, vocational, recreational, medical, and religious programs evidenced that fact. It was a network that could be summed up in the words of a tap dancing instructor who was providing learning opportunities for adults in whom 'dormant desires had become fertile.'

As noted, 196 respondents were interviewed: 50 participated

in the semi-structured interview process and 146 respondents who were providing opportunities for learning were less formally interviewed. Inclusion of the latter group had not been intended but as the project evolved, their comments significantly contributed to the study. An anaylsis of each group will be made. In addition, a comparison of results of information seeking and nature of learning will be made between the 50 respondents participating in the semi-structured interview process with 81 respondents the researcher interviewed in Houston, Texas (see Appendix).

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Demographic data for the random sample is as follows:

TABLE 1
SEX OF PORT TOWNSEND RESPONDENTS

Sex: Male 25 Female 25

TABLE 2
AGE OF PORT TOWNSEND RESPONDENTS

Age	N=50	Percent
19	1	2.00
20-29	7	14.00
30-39	19	38.00
40-49	10	20.00
50-59	6	12.00
60-69	2	4.00
70-79	2	4.00
80-89	2	4.00
90+	1	2.00

Mean age: 43.6; male mean age, 44.32; female mean age, 42.88.

TABLE 3
EDUCATION OF PORT TOWNSEND RESIDENTS

Education	N=50	Percent
0- 8	4	8.00
9-11	1	2.00
12	8	16.00
13-15	20	40.00
16	9	18.00
17+	8	16.00

Mean education: 13.8; male mean education, 14.6; female mean education, 13.0.

LEARNING RESOURCES

The 50 randomly selected respondents participated in a total of 320 learning activities or 6.40 per respondent. In a similar study conducted by the author in Houston, Texas, 81 respondents had conducted 625 learning activities or 7.72 per respondent. Port Townsend respondents used a total of 1052 resources for their 320 learning activities or 3.29 per activity; Houston respondents used 2222 resources for their 625 activities or 3.56 per activity.

To whom did respondents turn for learning information, how did they rate the resources, and what resources would they most likely choose to use for learning 'next year'? The semi-structured interview instrument contained a list of 15 resources from which they could choose and rate (see Tables 4, 5, 6).

Insert Tables 4, 5, 6 here.

From the above tables it can be seen that the five most frequently selected resources included respondents' own selves, friends, own books and magazines, 'other' resources, and family. The five least frequently selected resources included books and magazines from friends/the media, employers, clergy, physicians, and public librarians.

Types of Learning

In order to determine the kinds of learning conducted by the respondents 'last year', activities were sorted into nine categories: vocational, domestic, interpersonal, religious, medical, recreational, cultural, political, and other. Table 7 indicates a frequency distribution by types of learning for the 320 learning activities.

Insert Table 7 here

The following is a self-selected sample of the 320 learning activities that respondents conducted: taking responsibility for a troubled child; designing a switch for an Electrolux sweeper; lapidary work in Arizona; relating to mildly hypersensitive child; birth of first child; growth in family relationships; raised bed gardening; accordian lessons; separation from husband; foster care for the elderly; brick laying; computer classes; sailing lessons; death of grandmother; reloading ammunition; Victorian

TABLE 4

FREQUENCY USE OF RESOURCES FOR LEARNING PROJECTS

IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

	Respondents Frequency of Use*	Percentage of Projects**	Rank Order
Own self	171	53.43	1
Family	114	35.63	5
Own books/magazines	117	36.56	3
Books/magazines from friends	48	15.00	10
Books/magazines from libraries	72	22.50	6
Media, T.V., Radio, Newspapers	48	15.00	10
Friends	133	41.56	2
Informal group	50	15.63	9
Clergy	19	5.94	13
Physician	12	3.75	14
Employer	22	6.88	12
Paid teacher	56	17.50	8
Public librarian	7	2.19	15
Businessperson	68	21.25	7
Other	115	35.94	4

*Total resources: 1052
**320 learning projects

TABLE 5

AVERAGE RATING* OF RESOURCES USED IN LEARNING PROJECTS

BY RESPONDENTS IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

Resource	Respondents' Frequency of Use	Rank Order	Average Rating	Rank Order
Own self	171	1	3.64	10
Family	114	5	3.86	5
Own books/ magazines	117	3	3.62	11
Books/magazines from friends	48	10	3.50	13
Books/magazines from libraries	72	6	3.46	14
Media, T.V., radio, newspapers	48	10	3.04	15
Friends	133	2	3.83	7
Informal group	50	9	3.86	5
Clergy	19	13	4.21	2
Physician	12	14	3.75	9
Employer	22	12	3.59	12
Paid teacher	56	8	4.09	3
Public librarian	7	15	4.29	1
Businessperson	68	7	3.78	8
Other	115	4	4.01	4

*Rating scale: (1) No satisfaction, (2) Little satisfaction, (3) Satisfied, (4) Much satisfaction, (5) Complete satisfaction

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

USING VARIOUS RESOURCES 'LAST YEAR' AND 'NEXT YEAR'

	'Last Year'			'Next Year'		
Resource	N=50*	Percent	Rank Order	N=50*	Percent	Rank Order
Own self	39	78.00	2	23	46.00	1
Family	32	64.00	5	19	38.00	5
Own books/ magazines	38	76.00	3	21	42.00	3
Books/magazines from friends	18	36.00	11	12	24.00	10
Books/magazines from libraries	26	52.00	6	21	42.00	3
Media, TV, radio, newspapers	19	38.00	10	7	14.00	12
Friends	34	68.00	4	19	38.00	5
Informal group	20	40.00	9	15	30.00	7
Clergy	10	20.00	13	4	8.00	14
Physician	10	20.00	13	2	4.00	15
Employer	16	32.00	12	7	14.00	12
Paid teacher	23	46.00	7	14	28.00	8
Public librarian	4	8.00	15	6	12.00	11
Businessperson	23	46.00	7	13	26.00	9
Other	41	82.00	1	23	46.00	1

*N=number of respondents participating in the research.

TABLE 7

TYPE OF LEARNING 'LAST YEAR' FOR
320 LEARNING ACTIVITIES BY 50 RESPONDENTS
IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

Type of learning	Frequency	Percent	Rank Order
Vocational	80	25.00	2
Domestic	81	25.31	1
Interpersonal	19	5.94	6
Religious	17	5.31	7
Medical	14	4.37	8
Recreational	34	10.63	5
Cultural	35	10.94	4
Political	0	0.00	9
Other	40	12.50	3

architecture; marine management seminar; upholster chair; operating a business; accepting a new position; cooking with new recipes; classes at Judicial College; mythology/Joseph Campbell; medieval history; womens' weight lifting; coaching soccer; buying a home; opening a restraurant; Tai Chi and guided meditation; wooden boat building; real estate appraisal; second degree ReiKi, taro card workshop, and use of crystals; planning world cruise by sailboat; raising winter vegetables; travel to Europe; job promotion; harvesting wild mushrooms; aerobic dance; home construction; eye surgery; getting along with new employees; investments; house fire; working with Girl Scouts; carpentry; working through depression; golf club refinishing, caddy on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour; financial secretary in local church.

The researcher came to the conclusion that living is learning and learning is often supported by an invisible community network of a wide range of resources.

Anecdotal Remarks Related to Resources

A robust aspect of field research is permitting respondents to speak for themselves. (The Houston study was conducted with a tape recorder, the Port Townsend study was conducted by note taking and interview recall. Although both methods permitted respondent interaction, the tape recorder is recommended.) The following comments selectively represent respondents' learning and learning styles.

'The dog didn't climb the tree but my dog climbed the tree because a bear was chasing him' (75 year old retired male talking about his inner drive to pursue information from whatever resource available).

'I don't think there is anything on earth as educational as nature, it is different from trying to learn from a teacher' (78 year old retired female talking about rock hunting).

'A school teacher suggested we take our son to a doctor to have him examined for hypertension, our attitudes toward our son began to change as we understood what was happening; this also saved our marriage' (40 year old retired servicreman).

'I taught German at the Language Center and in the process I improved my English' (28 year old female).

'I had three bad experiences in life: death of my mother, a divorce, and my job situation. But damn it, I'm good. The book I'M OK YOU'RE OK, family, and constructive advice from friends have helped bring about improvement' (41 year old male).

'Books have always been a great part of my life but even so, we still had to learn a lot of that on our own' (54 year old

female talking about remodeling a home).

'There were times when I was being stressed by the separation and times when I was being challenged, trying to cope and making it a more positive process. And during this time I was going through counseling, assessing, thinking, and reading things out' (38 year old woman going through a divorce).

'I grew up as a professional gospel singer with my parents. It was terrible, trying to understand what Christianity meant when it wasn't real, but, it is real now because of the new church that I found' (29 year old female).

'I spent a lot of time fighting off my parents' background, then, when I was about 22, I really realized the power of books' (32 year old male).

'I've been learning about how a large department store works, using a computerized cash register, ordering, and selling; I never did that before' (28 year old female).

'I learn more on my own than ever from a book, too, I go to class but I feel I know as much as the teacher so I don't feel like paying so I do it on my own' (38 year old female preparing for laboratory proficiency test and studying astrology).

'I learned about pre-menstural syndrome from an instructor at college and through the Presbyterian church' (33 year old female).

'I used to have a gun collection and after the divorce I decided to get my collection going again, have been learning about reloading ammunition at the sportsman's club and from magazines that I subscribe to' (52 year old retired fireman).

'I wanted to learn about Victorian architecture but all the books were checked out of the public library so, I had to buy my own' (40 year old female studying Victorian architecture).

'You don't necessarily need a teacher, you need people who can assist in the problem solving effort' (46 year old male, manager of a public facility).

'I like my business as a chimney sweep. I learned about it from a national company. I got their books and studied about it. Now I talk with people as I work and also give lectures. I feel like I am intercepting fate' (35 year old male fireman who started a part-time job as a chimney sweep).

'I really found myself giving more satisfactory ratings to those situations in which I had one on one contact than with group situations' (33 year old male, manager of a public service organization).

'I am the kind of person going through life learning by experience and pursuing experiences. In time it will be minor but now it is major, the biggest challenge I've ever gotten into' (37 year old male who purchased a clothing store).

'I tell lawyers they are to educate me from the viewpoint of the client' (46 year old District Court Judge).

'Counseling was a big help; it allowed me to understand my hangups with my mother and my own mothering' (28 year old female).

'Blind diving. I had learned about it but it is different doing it for the first time. I asked a former instructor how to see in the mucky darkness; I discovered I had to put a plastic bag of clear water in front of me and shine my light through it' (28 year old male underwater diver).

'I learned about computerized type setting from company in Seattle, classes were put on by the company. Anytime I have the opportunity to learn something new, if it's the least bit interesting, I'll try it' (40 year old female).

'We had a Mexican exchange student in our home for two months, we learned a lot from him; that certainly was a learning experience' (33 year old male).

'It stimulates me to think; I read for pleasure, to get a better knowledge of things...I don't care what it is, I'm amazed at the research put into good writing' (55 year old male).

'We're planning a trip around the world in August and I had to order a lot of things from the State Library. High energy. Planning is so much fun' (37 year old female, Viet Nam widow).

'I put in the raised bed garden this past year, didn't realize how well the ground held the water. Some members of the garden club had raised bed gardens; I talked with them after the meetings. But I learn kind of slowly' (54 year old male).

'I saved money to make a trip to Europe. I know some people who went, they helped inspire me. The travel agent also helped' (19 year old male).

'I've had to learn how to deal with pressure; two previous bosses stayed with the company, that's how I was able to move up the ladder' (28 year old male who was given increased responsibilities under new management).

'We belong to the microbiological society. During the fall and spring they have monthly meetings, plus we get out in the woods on our own. This has been a totally new activity' (54 year

old female).

'I took aerobic dance classes at the recreation center. It took about three weeks to get into condition and follow the routine' (34 year old female).

'This town is one of those towns that force you to learn, no real formal education, so if you are to learn you have to do it yourself' (35 year old male who opened a pizza parlor).

'I had a new contact implant in my eye, cataract removal. It's wonderful. Now I am the eyes for my husbsand' (87 year old female, 90 year old husband is nearly blind).

'I've learned how to cook at the cafe. I was one of 14 children and learned how to cook, but, now I've learned how to do things a different way, make things attractive to eat' (31 year old female).

'I got on the library board, learned a lot just from other members and at city council' (35 year old male).

'Our home burned to the ground so I had to become an archaeologist, sifting through everything. We learned so much through that experience: insurance settlements, investments, how to be willing to accept help, the Morman Church' (36 year old female).

'I've been trying to get a handle on my life. It's been a day by day kind of year, much of the learning has been put on hold' (female overcoming depression).

'I just recently retired and became a caddy on the LPGA tour, and I learned how to refinish golf clubs from a Seattle man who works on professional golf clubs; I've put quite a bit of time into it' (58 year old male).

LEARNING PROVIDERS

The second, less rigorously administered phase of the study was the process of discovering who was providing learning opportunities in Port Townsend. Key respondents introduced the researcher to other learning providers and were initially identified by friends, study of community bulletin boards and local newspapers, and observing community activities.

Name repetition led the researcher to conclude that some learning providers were 'learning gatekeepers.' These included key individuals in agricultural extension, county recreation, the hospital district, community action, state employment office, a language center, Friends of the Library, a cultural center, and unrepresented persons.

Categories of learning providers included governmental

agencies, business, artisans, the wellness community, formally organized clubs, informal interest groups, churches, and individual citizens.

Learning Providers in Government

Learning providers in government included fire, police, and sheriff's departments; county extension; state social and health services; county planning; the port commission; county health department; community college; domestic violence service; community action, state educational center for the arts, museum, and city library. The surprising element about learning providers in governmnet was the diversity and intensity of opportunities for learning. Volunteers in fire, police, and sheriff departments were required to commit as high as 20 hours a month in on the job training. The Master Gardeners and Master Canners programs sponsored by county extension provided volunteers with 50 hours of training on the condition that 50 hours of volunteer service then be given to the community.

Learning Providers in Business

The business community provided learning opportunities that ranged from boat building and ship repairs to the local paper mill, and from department store management and service industries to local entrepreneur in the arts and crafts, cuisines, book stores, and related ventures. Manufacturing and service industries were more likely to provide learning opportunities for their employees in order to provide better products; entrepreneurs in the arts, crafts, and cuisines were more likely to provide learning opportunities for the public.

Learning Providers Among Artisans

Port Townsend has become a cultural center for writers, poets, artists, musicians, weavers, the dance, potters, black smiths, silversmiths and the like. Reading sessions for poets and writers, art fairs and exhibits, musical and dance productions were frequently held. It was not uncommon to discover artisans bartering for services, including teaching skills to one another. This tutorial bartering supported, in part, the learning habits of artisans.

Learning Providers In the Medical and Wellness Profession.

Doctors, dentists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other wellness professionals provided learning opportunities through newsletter networks, clinics, public forums, and personal contacts.

Learning Providers Among Formally Organized Clubs

Garden, microbiological, kayak, computer, contra folk and square dancing, fruit tree, 'Good Sams', geneology, sky diving, Kiwanis, Rotary, and Veterans of Foreign Wars were some of the clubs that provided learning opportunities. Other formally organized groups included the La Leche League, Women's Aglow Fellowship, Wooden Boat Foundation, Friends of the Library, and formally organized sports programs.

Learning Providers Among Informal Interest Groups

Informal interest groups providing opportunities for learning included an Alzheimers support group, peace coalition, draft counseling service, book studies, life history, astrology, tarot, and guided imagery groups.

Learning Providers Among Church Groups

Learning opportunities provided by the religious were primarily targeted for their own constituencies, however, a few activities were opened to the community at large. A Lutheran Church sponsored community wide theological and peace studies; other churches sponsored activities related to the family, abortion, Bible studies, nutrition and wellness, and one on one counseling.

Individual Learning Providers

Individuals also provided learning opportunities in their fields of interest including Latin, driver education, gardening, bee keeping, art and music therapy, guided meditation, wilderness survival, geneology, and as mentioned earlier, the arts.

Learning Providers and Newsletter Networks

A common communication device employed by individual and group learning providers was the newsletter network. Sixteen newsletters were collected, however one key informant indicated that at least 40 were published with some regularity.

LEARNING PROVIDER MOTIVES

As informal learning provider interviews progressed, providers frequently revealed motives behind their efforts. The following categories emerged: the need to be involved (particularly among retirees), the need to deal with life crises, the need to preserve dying arts, and the need to earn an income.

The Need to Become Involved

The need to become involved in some kind of an interpersonal activity resulted in a number of retirees becoming learning providers. A retiree who formed a fruit tree club, taught Latin,

and volunteered as a master gardener said: 'That's the way I get my kicks.' A retired naval parachute rigger now teaching sky diving noted: 'There's exhileration in watching a person successfully jump for the first time; how proud when they first do it.' 'Keep active, that's the secret of life, and I'm restless. I need something to do to keep active so I make myself available' commented a retired driver education teacher giving driving lessons. A retired university professor and editor of the Institute for Consciousness and Music newsletter continued to teach music therapy both in her home and to the healing profession. Other retirees, lawyers, homemakers, factory managers provided similar comments. One organization, The Friends of the Library, translated this need into quarterly segments of learning known as 'Adventures in Learning': at least ten courses were offered each quarter.

The Need to Deal With Life Crises

Doctors, environmentalists, homemakers and others told of life crises that led them to teaching others. A doctor related a personal crisis in medical school from which he developed a commitment to preventive medicine that resulted in publishing two newsletters, one for physicians and the other for patients. Another person in the wellness profession said: 'I'm in this business because the bottom fell out for me years ago: then I stumbled into this technique. Now I consider this to be the most important thing in the world: it is very important to me that I assist those whom I can with my technique.' An environmentalist experienced family tragedy in the coal mines of West Virginia saying: 'I've shouldered a lot of death to cancer in my family, black lung disease and asbestos....So now I'm looking at the broader perspective related to health, welfare, and the responsibility of industry to the environment.' A woman teaching meditative thought noted: 'I got involved in this through my own search for more and disillusionment with what was available and what I wanted, like an accumulation of disillusionment; the helplessness about the state of the world, and the total powerlessness to do anything about it. Dimensional Macrostructural Alignment is a new form for a new time. I immediately leaped on it even though I was cynical about the human potential movement.' An older female talked about her involvement with the Peninsula Advocates and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. She noted that when her son experienced mental illness the family was ostracized from the community; the Peninsula Advocates became a support group, for, as she said: 'That saved my life, before that we were torn into a thousand pieces.'

The Need to Preserve Dying Arts

Another trend discovered was the perceived need to preserve dying arts and traditions. With but one formal blacksmith program in the United States (operating in New Mexico), a member of the

Northwest Blacksmith Association spoke of his desire to preserve the art by attending workshops such as the one he was attending at Fort Worden. Other preservation efforts included constructing celtic harps and hammered dulcimers, recording local folklore and tunes, teaching a variety of folk dances, sponsoring fiddle contests and mastering such medieval instruments as the recorder. The Peninsula Weaver's Guild spun, dyed and wove their own wool. One guild member purchased and was restoring an 100 year old loom that originated in a New Hampshire mill town. The local museum supported geneological searches and history of local Native Americans. Two women proposed and had funded an environmental awareness program related to the delicate balance of marine life in the area. Two enterprising women formed a sailmaking and banner firm, commenting: 'To train a person to do all the handwork takes about two months; to become competent takes about six.' Several groups were responsible for reviving the nearly lost art of wooden boat building: one formed a Wooden Boat Foundation and sponsored an annual Wooden Boat Festival; the other formed the Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building.

The Need to Survive Economically

Young craftspersons and older retirees migrated to Port Townsend because of the prevailing art environment; to subsist, they founded enterprises including coffee shops that supported the arts, wrote grants to fund programs, and, as one young woman who had helped found the Wooden Boat Foundation, said: 'I had to pull a skill out of the hat to do what I wanted to do so I used my ballet background to teach aerobic and classical dance.' Another young writer and dance instructor dug ditches to support his publishing interests. 'The Old Cider Mill' was one of the earliest entrepreneural efforts, started by now middle-aged Quaker artists, the mill became one of early linkages for artists in the area. Highly educated, many of these artists gave up lucrative positions in order to participate in their 'living lightly' lifestyles, in the process, they made an impact on the invisible network of learning in the community.

LEARNING PROVIDERS AND LEARNING

Learning providers also talked about their own learning activities and though this was not pursued as rigorously as with the randomly selected respondents, their insights to learning were valuable.

A woman who had formerly taught lithography at the University of Michigan talked about her lithographs: 'I don't know why I ended up liking only learning by doing, learning by making mistakes--once you think you have it it whops you across the side of the head. It takes me five months to do a five color

lithograph.'

While giving the researcher a tour of the classroom studio in her home a woman said her interest in weaving started in World War II while working as a Red Cross volunteer. Now she saw teaching as 'a matter of getting them (the students) started, the rest is up to them, they have to do it to find out if they like it or not.'

'I had a teacher in seventh grade who taught science and was also an art teacher. He said: ''I hope if anything, that I have taught you to be an observer. If you become an observer you will be a lifelong learner'' was what an influential said that impressed a Presbyterian minister.

Coming from five generations of wooden boat builders, a formerly retired boat builder was now teaching his art to people from around the world, some of whom had never worked with wood. 'We definitely try to teach craftsmanship with wood and hand tools; the student becomes an extension of the wood and tools. It becomes a means of getting back to relaxation.'

Interviewing a silversmith in her portable shop, she said, 'everything I learned about working with silver was on my own; I carefully bought books that would help me. But this past year I was introduced to enameling on silver. I tried it and then found out that a class was going to be offered, so, I enrolled; I learned in two days what would have taken a year on my own.'

An owner of a crafts shop decided to conduct classes in 'cabbage patch' type doll making. She said: 'You know, some of the people who come to learn are convinced they cannot do this but after eight hours of lessons they do. And you know, I've never had a failure.'

'We are required to take 12 hours of continuing education a year to keep our licenses. Some of the training is sponsored by insurance companies and others by people in Seattle. We must keep ourselves and our staff trained if we are to keep up with our competition' said the partner of an insurance firm.

The pastor of a Lutheran church said: Christian eduction is my awareness of the responsibility of the church in society as related to the gospel so that I become more inclusive in my concerns, for the community and the world in which I live.'

In the middle of the interview process in which a physician was talking about his self-health care classes, he quietly interrupted with a thought from THE CANTEBURY TALES: 'And gladly would he learn and gladly would he teach.'

The invisible network of learning in Port Townsend was discovered in a variety of environments including businesses, governmental agencies, domestic (primarily in homes, a form of 'cottage learning'), recreational and nature, and religious settings.

TYPES OF LEARNING OFFERED BY LEARNING PROVIDERS

A total of 346 learning opportunities were discovered to have been provided by learning providers in a twelve month period. Table 8 analyzes the types and percentages of each.

Insert Table 8 here

ANALYSIS OF LEARNING AND LEARNING PROVIDERS IN PORT TOWNSEND

Table 9 provides a frequency comparison of types of learning and opportunities for learning being provided in Port Townsend.

Insert Table 9 here

Although neither group is considered representative nor exhaustive, what can inferred from discrepancies between respondents' learning and learning opportunities available in the reporting period?

First, whereas the most frequently mentioned learning opportunity was identified as cultural (21.10 percent), learners indicated that 10.84 percent of their learning was culturally oriented. The discrepancy could be due to the fact that: (a) The cultural community was highly visible and advocated by a particular clientele; (b) cultural learning was less representative in the community at large; (c) cultural learning did not demand the same level of attention as did vocational or domestic learning, the latter could be equated with primary needs while cultural activities could have been perceived as secondary.

Second, medical learning opportunities seemed to be disproportionately large (19.64 percent of all opportunities) compared to the learners' 4.37 percent of activities in this category. The discrepancy could stem from the fact that though the medical profession had developed an extensive wellness program, cost, age, and elegibility factors could have screened out many community members.

TABLE 8

TYPES OF LEARNING PROVIDED BY
LEARNING PROVIDERS IN
PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

Type of Learning	Number (N=346)	Percentage
Cultural	73	21.10
Medical	68	19.65
Domestic	44	12.72
Recreational	39	11.27
Other	35	10.12
Vocational	30	8.67
Interpersonal	23	6.65
Political	18	5.20
Religious	16	4.62

TABLE 3

A COMPARISON OF RESPONDENTS' LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND AVAILABLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

Type	L1* (N=320)	L2** (N=346)	L1 %	L2 %	L1 Rank	L2 Rank
Vocational	80	30	25.00	8.67	2	6
Domestic	81	44	25.31	12.72	1	3
Interpersonal	19	23	5.94	6.65	6	7
Religious	17	16	5.31	4.62	7	9
Medical	14	68	4.37	19.65	8	2
Recreational	34	39	10.63	11.27	5	4
Cultural	35	73	10.94	21.10	4	1
Political	0	18	0.00	5.20	9	8
Other	40	16	12.50	10.12	3	5

* Respondents' learning activities. **Learning opportunities

Third, whereas respondents indicated one of their most frequent learning activities was related to vocation (25.00 percent), only 8.67 percent of the learning opportunities were identified as being provided in the vocational arena. Several reasons can be given for this discrepancy: (a) the researcher did not get access to one of the major industrial learning providers in the community due to labor negotiations, (b) lack of access to gatekeepers in the business community, and (c) researcher's bias. That vocational learning opportunities existed were evidenced by responses from randomly sampled respondents.

Fourth, in some instances learning providers had more of a vested interest in their activities and as a result, were willing to 'live lightly' than did the general public.

Fifth, although not a discrepancy, the random sample revealed that some of the learners were also learning providers.

COMMUNICATING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Formally organized learning opportunities were communicated through business channels, local newspapers, newsletter networks, community bulletin boards, and word of mouth. Informally organized opportunities were communicated through community bulletin boards and word of mouth. Community nodes such as cafes, restraunts, community centers, and taverns usually attracted particular clienteles; learning opportunities were frequently communicated in these settings.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The researcher anticipated that he would discover a unique network of learning in Port Townsend, but as will be seen in a comparative analysis between this community and Houston, Texas, a surprisingly large number of similarities exist.

Whether they are aware of the fact or not, living requires adapting to those changes that individuals either choose to pursue, serendiptiously absorb, have accidentally thrust upon them, or that unwantingly come charging in upon their life spaces. Some learning offers pleasant surprises and new levels of achievement while others are required for the sake of survival.

To live is to learn. To live in community is to either consciously seek out or unconsciously benefit from the invisible network of learning that exists in community.

Port Townsend was unique in that many artisans impacted the town with their creative seeking and desire to learn as well as transmitting their skills to others; however, the researcher came

away from the study convinced that most communities, large or small, have their own 'invisible networks of learning.' There was a proliferation of cultural learning in Port Townsend, but, it is surmised that agricultural, manufacturing, military, shipping, or any other types of communities have their own 'invisible networks of learning.' Hidden, they can be taken for granted or go on unacknowledged, but when exposed, they could be shown to have a wholistic impact on the welfare of their communities. They impact the economic as well as the emotional health of community, for these 'invisible networks of learning' are the stuff of which lifelong learning is made.

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APPENDIX A

February 25, 1984, 1:40 A.M. Woke up to rain splatting on the skylight. My mind was put in gear. Since Thursday morning I have been thinking about a plan to conduct field research on learning in Port Townsend. I developed a simple outline of what I would like to do. I would like to inventory the formal, informal, and independent learning that is taking place in the city. I will use three approaches or methods: Key informants, snowball sampling, and random sampling, and will look at industry, public and private services, and independent learning. The result will be a comprehensive overview of learning and the economic, cultural, and political(?) impact it has on a small community. I will look at a six month segment of time, interviewing respondents, asking them to recall learning activities that were sponsored or engaged in over that period. And here is where my mind was put in gear: ask Crown Zellerbach for a grant of about $3,000 to conduct the study. I had not set that big a price tag at first but now realize that some expenses will be incurred. To reach Crown 'Z' I'm going to need some authorization including: letters from people like Father Truitt, Ken Howerton, and possibly Community Ed. in Olympia. This thing is beginning to take shape. I believe I can pull it off!

LEARNING IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON
(Copy of March 1984 research proposal)

We live in a learning society. Too frequently this fact is hidden to the casual observer. The primary reason for the invisibleness of a learning society is our perception of learning. We frequently equate learning with formal classes, credits, and information gathered from books. Learning does take place through classes, formal creditation, and from books, but, studies in the last fifteen years indicate that it is far more pervasive than had been suspected. Learning is a lifelong experience.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to uncover the extent of learning in Port Townsend, Washington. An unusual community, Port Townsend offers a wide mix of learning opportunities for a city its size. The extent of the learning network is invisible to the naked eye, creating what the researcher suspects, is an 'invisible learning network.' Uncovering this network and revealing how it adds to the vitality of the city is the purpose of this study.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Formal learning - Learning that is undertaken for formal credit or licensing purposes.

Incidental learning - Learning which 'may be acquired more or less accidentally, and without awareness of the learner' (Cropley, 1977, p. 37).

Lifelong learning - A 'comprehensive concept which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning extended throughout the life-span of an individual to attain fullest possible development in personal, social and professional life' (Dave in Skager, 1978, p. 6).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it will reveal the pervasiveness of lifelong learning in a small city. It will show how that the pulse of the community is affected by lifelong learning even as it is by economic transactions. Learning and the sense of accomplishment that ensues provides opportunities for human interaction, influences mental well-being, enhances productivity, contributes to civic pride, and builds bridges of understanding.

The study will be conducted using a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Key respondents in industry, community organizations, private groups, and from the community at large will be invited to become part of the study. In turn, these key informants will be asked to identify others who could contribute to the study. Finally, a random sample of 30 families will be selected to participate.

By interviewing respondents in person using a semi-structured interview questionnaire the researcher will have the opportunity to not only ask respondents uniform sets of questions, they will also have the opportunity to elaborate as they choose.

All respondents will be asked to limit their learning activities and experiences to the previous six month period of time.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE RESEARCHER

Dr. John C. Shirk, primary researcher.
B.A. Central Bible College, Springfield, MO., 1957.
M.A. New York University, New York, New York, 1964.

B.D. Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, 1968.
M.S.L.S. Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, 1973.
EdD Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, 1983.

Pastor, The United Methodist Church, 1966-1973.
Librarian, Houston Public Library, 1973-1980.

Recipient of a $12,000 Mott Fellowship to attend Texas A&M University to study at the Center for Community Education.

Doctoral Record of Study: 'Relevance Attributed to Urban Public Libraries by Adult Learners: A Case Study and Content Analysis of 81 Interviews.'

APPENDIX B

LEARNING IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON AND HOUSTON, TEXAS: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

Investigating learning in Port Townsend, Washington provided the researcher with an opportunity to conduct a modified replication of his Houston study. The results, though limited by unrepresentative samples of respondents in each community, had its strength in those samples in that a wide variety of respondents participated (see Appendices C, D. E and F for comparative frequency tables).

What was discovered?

a. The character of a community can be discovered in the learning patterns of its residents.

b. Individual learning can be influenced by such force fields as community character; trigger points, i.e., life crises and major events; learning influentials; and the daily responsibilities of living.

c. Eighty of 81 respondents indicated they had learned something new in a person year in Houston versus 48 of 50 in Port Townsend, or 98.77 percent versus 96 percent, indicating that most adults got involved in at least one learning activity in the previous person year.

d. Reading materials, own self, friends, and family could be expected to be the most frequently used resources related to learning something new.

e. Public librarians, physicians, the clergy, and employers could be expected to be the least frequently appropriated resources for learning.

Evidence supporting the supposition that learning is influenced by the character of a community could possiblybe seen in the disparity of vocational learning in Houston, a major industrial center and a small non-industrial community, Port Townsend.

Religious learning among adults is quantitatively limited, however, the clergy is highly rated as a learning resource.

Whereas vocational type learning was more prevelant in Houston, domestic type learning was more prevelant in Port Townsend. Could this be a phenomenon of small town versus an urban metropolis?

It had been anticipated that cultural learning would be more

dominate in Port Townsend than Houston due to the presence of a large art community but as can be seen in Appendix F, little difference existed which could support the hypothesis that the visible presence of a teaching group such as in Port Townsend may have attracted artists to migrate to the area but have negligible influence on the uninitiated due to dominating force fields surrounding the uninitiated.

It was suspected that since the wellness profession in Port Townsend had developed an extensive wellness program, small town respondents would be more inclined to participate in medical learning activities and turn to physicians than their urban cohorts. Just the opposite, 8.00 percent versus 3.75; and 40.74 percent of the Houston versus 20.00 percent of the Port Townsend respondents used physicians for at least one of their learning activities. In addition, in Houston 5.12 percent of the learning was medically related versus 4.37 percent for Port Townsend.

Demographic data for Houston and Port Townsend does not provide a clue as to why more Houston respondents turned to physicians as a resource for learning than their Port Townsend cohorts. Could it be that urban residents are more likely to confer with physicians than those in small towns?

AGE DISTRIBUTION IN HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS AND
JEFFERSON COUNTY, WASHINGTON BASED ON
1980 CENSUS DATA

County	20-29	30-44	45-59	60+	Total
Harris	15.0	19.9	15.0	14.5	64.4
Jefferson	20.3	21.9	15.2	14.5	71.9

Although the data is not presented, it was discovered that public libraries were used as a learning resource in 10.72 percent of the Houston and 15.00 of the Port Townsend projects. Seen from a different perspective, 39.51 percent of the Houston and 30.00 percent of the Port Townsend respondents used public libraries for at least one of their learning activities. This could indicate that Port Townsend respondents were less likely to be public library users for learning but those who did could be expected to use them more frequently for new learning activities than their Houston cohorts.

Most highly rated learning resources could be expected to be such professionals as the clergy, public librarians, and paid teachers. The family as a learning resource could also be

expected to receive a high rating: could this this be the result of an intimacy factor?

The media, reading materials and one's self could be expected to receive the lowest learning resource ratings.

Except for the rating of librarians, Port Townsend respondents consistently rated learning resources lower than did their Houston cohorts.

Port Townsend residents were less likely to identify learning projects they would have liked to pursue next year than their Houston cohorts. Could this be attributed to a kind of small town mystique that might involve a 'fatalistic' view of the future versus a possible mystique found in urban living that could be summed up in 'living in the fast lane'?

Rank ordering of frequency of use and rating of resources was surprisingly constant for both small town Port Townsend and metropolitan Houston.

Although the quantitative data provided in this report does not permit the researcher to empirically demonstrate that respondents' learning activities contribute to the economic health of a community, inferences to that end can be made. As an individual who signs up and pays for a woman's weight lifting class helps to circulate that community's economic resources, so does the person who takes up the sport of soccer, jogging, learns to knit or make home improvements. Spending four dollars for a skein of wool has a direct impact on a community's economic base; classes for credit or licensing, though hopefully bringing a participant an economic reward in the form of salary increases or a better position, frequently have a delayed effect though supposedly a greater economic impact in the long run. Whether the economic impact of learning is immediate or delayed, the researcher is convinced that an impact is made and that the case for lifelong learning has broad implications for a community, particularly when the invisible network of learning is exposed for what it is, a positive community asset.

APPENDIX C

FREQUENCY USE OF RESOURCES* FOR LEARNING PROJECTS

IN HOUSTON, TEXAS AND PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

	Respondents Frequency of Use		Percentage of Projects		Rank Order	
	Hou**	P.T.***	Hou	P.T.	Hou	P.T.
Own self	313	171	50.08	53.43	2	1
Family	179	114	28.64	35.63	4	5
Own books/magazines	319	117	51.04	36.56	1	3
Books/magazines from friends	102	48	16.32	15.00	11	10
Books/magazines from libraries	139	72	22.24	22.50	7	6
Media, T.V., Radio, Newspapers	115	48	18.40	15.00	9	10
Friends	259	133	41.44	41.56	3	2
Informal group	157	50	25.12	15.63	6	9
Clergy	65	19	10.40	5.94	13	13
Physician	50	12	8.00	3.75	14	14
Employer	87	22	13.92	6.88	12	12
Paid teacher	103	56	16.48	17.50	10	8
Public librarian	30	7	4.80	2.19	15	15
Businessperson	136	68	21.76	21.25	8	7
Other	166	115	26.56	35.94	5	4

*Total resources: Houston, 2222; Port Townsend, 1134
**Hou - Houston, 625 learning projects
***P.T. - Port Townsend, 320 learning projects

APPENDIX D

AVERAGE RATING* OF RESOURCES USED IN LEARNING PROJECTS

BY RESPONDENTS IN HOUSTON, TEXAS AND PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

Resource	Respondents' Frequency of Use		Rank Order		Average Rating		Rank Order	
	Hou**	P.T.***	Hou	P.T.	Hou	P.T.	Hou	P.T.
Own self	313	171	2	1	3.98	3.64	6	10
Family	179	114	4	5	4.37	3.86	3	6
Own books/ magazines	319	117	1	3	3.83	3.62	10	11
Books/magazines from friends	102	48	11	10	3.80	3.50	12	13
Books/magazines from libraries	139	72	7	6	3.68	3.46	14	14
Media, T.V., radio, newspapers	115	48	9	10	3.25	3.04	15	15
Friends	253	133	3	2	3.94	3.83	9	7
Informal group	157	50	6	9	3.76	3.86	13	5
Clergy	65	19	13	13	4.48	4.21	2	2
Physician	50	12	14	14	3.95	3.75	7	9
Employer	87	22	12	12	3.81	3.59	11	12
Paid teacher	103	55	10	8	4.63	4.09	1	3
Public librarian	30	7	15	15	4.22	4.29	5	1
Businessperson	136	63	8	7	3.95	3.78	7	8
Other	166	115	5	4	4.35	4.01	4	4

*Rating scale: (1) No satisfaction, (2) Little satisfaction, (3) Satisfied, (4) Much satisfaction, (5) Complete satisfaction

**Hou - Houston ***P.T. - Port Townsend

APPENDIX E

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS IN
HOUSTON, TEXAS AND PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON
USING VARIOUS RESOURCES 'LAST YEAR' AND 'NEXT YEAR'

	'Last Year'						'Next Year'					
	Houston			Port Townsend			Houston			Port Townsend		
Resource	*N=81	%	Rank Order	N=50	%	Rank Order	N=81	%	Rank Order	N=50	%	Rank Order
Own self	62	76.54	4	39	78.00	2	63	77.78	1	23	46.00	1
Family	54	66.67	5	32	64.00	5	43	53.09	6	19	38.00	5
Own books/ magazines	70	86.42	1	38	76.00	3	63	77.78	1	21	42.00	3
Books/magazines from friends	42	51.85	10	18	36.00	11	32	39.51	12	12	24.00	10
Books/magazines from libraries	47	58.02	8	26	52.00	6	48	59.26	3	21	42.00	3
Media, TV, radio, newspapers	50	61.73	6	19	38.00	10	33	40.74	11	7	14.00	12
Friends	63	77.78	3	34	68.00	4	47	58.02	4	19	38.00	5
Informal group	43	53.09	9	20	40.00	9	43	53.09	6	15	30.00	7
Clergy	33	40.74	13	10	20.00	13	27	33.33	12	4	8.00	14
Physician	33	40.74	13	10	20.00	13	18	22.22	15	2	4.00	15
Employer	40	49.83	11	16	32.00	12	27	33.33	12	7	14.00	12
Paid teacher	39	48.15	12	23	46.00	7	41	50.62	7	14	28.00	9
Public librarian	19	23.46	15	4	8.00	15	21	25.93	14	6	12.00	11
Businessperson	50	61.73	6	23	46.00	7	37	45.69	8	13	26.00	9
Other	65	80.25	2	41	82.00	1	44	54.32	5	23	46.00	1

*N=number of respondents participating in the research.

APPENDIX F

TYPE OF LEARNING 'LAST YEAR' FOR

81 RESPONDENTS IN HOUSTON, TEXAS AND

50 RESPONDENTS IN PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

	Frequency		Percent		Rank Order	
Type of learning	Hou*	P.T.**	Hou	P.T.	Hou	P.T.
Vocational	206	80	32.96	25.00	1	2
Domestic	102	81	16.32	25.31	2	1
Interpersonal	53	19	8.48	5.94	5	6
Religious	58	17	9.28	5.31	4	7
Medical	32	14	5.12	4.37	7	8
Recreational	79	34	12.64	10.63	3	5
Cultural	52	35	8.32	10.94	6	4
Political	12	0	1.92	0.00	9	9
Other	31	40	4.96	12.50	8	3

*Hou - 625 learning activities
**P.T. - 320 learning activities